WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Creation of Separate Telecom Districts for Dhemaji and Lakhimpur in Assam

*484. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the people of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of Assam have to travel upto 450 Kms to get their problems of billing, operational facilities etc. redressed from Telecom District Office at Tezpur;

(b) whether Government are aware that these two districts remain cut-off from rest of the country by rail and road communications during every summer due to floods;

(c) if so, whether Government would consider creation of two separate telecom districts for Dhemaji and Lakhimpur; and

(d) the details of effective measures being taken for immediate redressal of the aforesaid problems?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ): (a) Sub Divisional Officers are posted at Lakhimpur and Dhemaji to take care of operational and maintenance needs of the telecom services and redressal of many of the public grievances.

(b) Lakhimpur & Dhemaji are flood prone areas and cut-off by road link to Tezpur during heavy rains.

(c) and (d) Creation of separate Telecom District at Lakhimpur and Dhemaji is not feasible because of genuine administrative, operational and technical contraints. However, official of the Telecom District Head-quarters at Tezpur are being instructed to personally visit Lakhimpur and Dhemaji as frequently as possible and as required to attend to their problems.

Credit Admissible to Farming Community

*485. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the total credit admissible to farming community;

(b) whether the banks are extending 18 per cent credit under the priority sector lending;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to ensure that the credit reaches the farming community in time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI R. JANARTHANAM): (a) and (b) As reported by Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in terms of extant policy, commercial banks are required to grant atleast 18% of their Net Bank Credit (NBC) as finance to agriculture. However, despite substantial increase in the ground level flow of credit to agriculture from public sector banks from a level of Rs. 15857 crores (1991) to Rs. 31012 crores (1997), the target of 18% of NBC to agriculture has not been fully achieved by the commercial banks as may be seen from the data given hereunder pertaining to the performance of public sector banks (March 1995-March 1998) in extending credit to agriculture:

As on last Friday	Lending to Agriculture Outstandings (Rs. in crores)	% of Agricultural Credit to Net Bank Credit
March 1995	23513	13.91
March 1996	26351	14.29
March 1997	31012	16.35
March 1998*	34304	15.72

* (Data Provisional)

(c) and (d) The targets for priority sector as well as agriculture have been